

NEWARK
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Press Release:

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**MAYOR JAMES AND PLANNED PARENTHOOD LAUNCH 'FIRST THINGS FIRST'
FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN CITY OF NEWARK**

Mayor Sharpe James today announced that the City of Newark and Planned Parenthood of Essex County (PPEC) have launched a bold campaign to promote the building of stronger families and to drastically reduce adolescent pregnancy by 50 percent, by the end of this decade.

"First Things First - Plan a Family Before You Have a Baby" is an innovative program created by Planned Parenthood on the national and local levels. Initially, the focus in Essex County will be on adolescents from the greater Newark area, he explained.

Mayor James said, "The health care objective is to enable adolescents to take charge of their lives by motivating more teens to be sexually responsible and to avoid unintended pregnancies.

"Our youth in Newark, indeed young people all over this country, must start to re-evaluate their priorities and realize that their actions now will determine the quality of their lives and have a profound impact on their future."

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The Mayor continued, "While we as parents must set an example for them to follow, only the youth themselves can stop the trend of babies having babies.

"The initiative being launched today by Planned Parenthood charges teenagers to take responsibility for their personal actions and to ask themselves some very basic questions. To decide to plan a family first before having a baby can cause a fundamental change in the outlook and the lives of our young people," James added.

Delores Tyson, PPEC executive director, agreed and said, "As the leading reproductive health care agency in Essex County, we are committed to reducing the staggering number of teen pregnancies in this country from the current number of 2,074 to only 1,000 by the end of this decade."

"We know this program seems overly ambitious," stated Reverend George Ryder, teen coordinator for PPEC, "but we have a road map to effect this reduction and we know where we are going. We would like to see the stability and achievement that schools and neighborhoods experience when there is a presence of stronger family cohesiveness."

The plan to strengthen families and reduce teenage pregnancy is multi-faceted and encompasses the medical services of PPEC as well as the outreach educational services. Stepped-up outreach work will begin to reach even more Essex County residents in need of confidential reproductive health care on a sliding fee scale. In 1989, Planned Parenthood professionals serviced 14,627 constituents.

Tina Braswell, PPEC education director, stated, "Our education department has already begun to implement the program we designed to ensure greater family stability throughout the 1990's and the next decade. The Poster Project kicked off the campaign in the Newark schools. Depicting family life, selected posters will be on display in City Hall for the next two weeks. The Project is part of our campaign strategy to involve students directly in our efforts."

An overview of Planned Parenthood's educational program includes assemblies in all of Newark's 10 high schools featuring PPEC's Teen Peer Counselors centered around the theme of marriage and dysfunctional families. Seminars with the teens at youth-serving groups, churches and civic groups are also slated. An ongoing essay contest about the importance of the family will be featured each year, and winners will receive awards at the end of the year. Chestnut High School students are targeted for periodic visits to Planned Parenthood centers to see and use the services available as well as to participate in parenting workshops.

"I personally think that young people need and want to have family unity," commented Jason Edmonds, PPEC teen peer counselor, "because we feel better about ourselves when the love and support of the family is behind us."

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Belinda Vines, a fellow PPEC teen peer counselor, added, "This campaign, which is directed at the youth in Newark, is good because I believe it will prevent teen pregnancy by making more of us think more seriously about the kind of family we should be striving towards."

Planned Parenthood is a non-profit reproductive health care agency providing confidential counseling on birth control, family planning and other related medical services to the women of Essex County regardless of age. For further information on the "First Things First" program or any service provided by Planned Parenthood of Essex County, please contact Lynne Monson, PPEC communications director, at 151 Washington Street, Newark, New Jersey, 07102 or call (201) 622-3900.